

speaking for up to 5 minutes each, with the following exceptions: Senator BYRD for the first 10 minutes, to be followed by Senator MURKOWSKI or his designee for 60 minutes, to be followed by Senator DURBIN or his designee for 50 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWNBACK. If an agreement regarding the crop insurance legislation can be made, it is expected that the Senate will begin its consideration as early as tomorrow afternoon. If no agreement can be made, the Senate may turn to any Legislative or Executive Calendar items available for action.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order following the remarks of Senator LAUTENBERG.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the 5-minute rule presently in place for morning business be extended for me to complete my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise now in strong support of a resolution offered by my colleague, Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island. At the same time, I commend him for all of his hard work in support of gun safety measures.

We are soon approaching an anniversary. Most anniversaries have a happy ring to them—wedding anniversaries, birthdays are often called an anniversary. Those are pleasant moments. But the anniversary we are talking about now is one we will remember for decades to come. It is the anniversary of a mammoth American tragedy.

It is only 31 days until April 20, 2000, the 1-year anniversary of the terrible tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado. We all remember that awful day almost a year ago. Across the Nation, people saw and heard the shocking news reports. Two students had stormed into their school and systematically shot and killed 12 classmates and a teacher. They also wounded 23 other students and teachers.

It makes me shudder when I recall the bloody carnage of that day. I had to shake my head in disbelief that this outrage could be committed in a school. No parent and no grandparent could avoid thanking goodness for the safety of their own families when they saw the horrors of those moments.

Those innocent, young people, full of life, running, scared, desperate, trying to get away from the gunmen—the image of the young man hanging out of the window trying to reach safety.

We thought that incident, that tragedy, would finally wake up Congress. That Congress would say: Let's end this; let's do what we can to stop this. And here, almost a year later, since that tragic moment, the American people have an obligation and a right to ask: What has Congress done to prevent another tragedy? How has Congress answered the cries and pleading of parents and grandparents who want to protect their children? What has Congress done to protect other families from gun violence? I ask the question and I will give the answer: Absolutely nothing. And it is a disgrace.

I and some of my colleagues have tried. During the debate on the juvenile justice bill, the Senate passed several gun safety measures, including my amendment to require criminal background checks at gun shows. It was a very close vote, a 50–50 tie. The Vice President, in his role as President of the Senate, came in to break the tie. And with that vote the Senate passed my measure to require background checks at gun shows. But still Congress has not completed action on that legislation, despite the support of organizations that we all know and agree with when it comes to law enforcement, groups endorsing the Senate-passed gun safety amendments, such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the International Brotherhood of Police Officers, Police Executive Research Forum, Police Foundation, Major Cities Chiefs, Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, and others. They all ask why we can't do something about controlling gun violence in our society.

We tried. I remind my colleagues that the gun show loophole amendment had bipartisan support. I was pleased to have that support from our friends on the other side of the aisle, people such as Senators DEWINE, FITZGERALD, LUGAR, VOINOVICH, WARNER, and Chafee, who is no longer with us. They all voted for my amendment.

And the juvenile justice bill, with the gun safety amendments, passed by a vote of 73–25. So there was strong, bipartisan support for moving forward on juvenile crime and trying to reduce gun violence. But that was back on May 20 of last year, 10 months ago. We have to look at what has happened since then.

The shootings haven't stopped. Most recently, there was a 6-year-old shot by a classmate in Michigan. There was another shooting spree near Pittsburgh, where five people were shot and three died when a gunman opened fire on a McDonald's and a Burger King.

There have been more shootings, from Fort Gibson, OK, to Los Angeles,

CA, where a gunman opened fire at a daycare center. We all remember the little children being led from a day school—holding a policeman's hands. They were being led away from someone who would later kill a postal worker because he had a different complexion than the killer. And there was also Fort Worth, TX, where young people at a prayer meeting were assaulted by a gunman. It has been one shooting after another. And these tragedies demonstrate that unless all communities are safe from gun violence, no community is safe from gun violence.

But while the vast majority of Americans want Congress to act, there is one special interest that says, no, the status quo is more than enough. The National Rifle Association has worked with its allies in this body and in the House of Representatives to block legislation every time it comes up. The same old reaction. Every time Congress wants to pass gun safety laws, the NRA calls on its friends to prevent progress.

Recent statements from the NRA show how desperate and extremist they have become. A man named Wayne LaPierre, the NRA executive vice president, attacked President Bill Clinton. He said that President Clinton was "willing to accept a certain level of killing to further his political agenda." That comment is outrageous, insulting, reckless, and irresponsible. But Mr. LaPierre didn't stop there. He also accused President Clinton of having "blood on his hands" because of the shooting of the basketball coach, Ricky Byrdsong. Just when you thought the NRA could not go any lower, they managed to do it.

The NRA is so wrong because, in that case, it was the State authorities who failed to pursue and prosecute Ricky Byrdsong's killer when he failed the background check. These painful comments are an outrage, and Mr. LaPierre and the whole organization, the NRA, ought to apologize to Mrs. Byrdsong.

The NRA is out of touch with the American people. Look at the polls. There is overwhelming support for common sense gun safety measures. The American people are pleading with Congress to reduce gun violence. And they want to close the gun show loophole that permits unidentified buyers from getting guns without a background check. If you have money in your pocket, you can walk out with a gun at your waist. You could be one of the 10 most wanted criminals in all America, or one of the terrorists from abroad whose names have become legendary, and you could buy guns at these gun shows from unlicensed dealers—no questions asked. Who are you? What is your name? Where do you live? Have you had a bad record? No, not one question is asked.

But the NRA attacks are nothing new. They constantly spout careless